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SUBJECT: ALASSANE OUATTARA RESTRUCTURES THE RDR

REF: COTE D'IVOIRE: FORMER PRIME MINISTER ALASSANE

OUATTARA RESTRUCTURES HIS PARTY

Classified By: POLOFF Phaedra Gwyn for reasons 1.4 b&d

¶1. (U) On March 4-5, presidential candidate and former Prime Minister Alassane Ouattara's political party, the RDR (Rally of Democratic Republicans), met at the UN-protected Golf Hotel in Abidjan, to restructure the party and increase the number of leadership positions at the top. More than 700 members turned out for the gathering. While pro-government newspapers are reporting that former Minister of Justice Henriette Diabate has been pushed aside, in fact she has not. She remains the Secretary General of RDR and the highest-ranking and most influential woman in the opposition.

¶2. (SBU) Since the crisis began in September 2002, RDR members have been targeted and sometimes killed by pro-government death squads. In Abidjan, the RDR headquarters was burned down shortly after the crisis began, and up until two months ago when the building was renovated, members were meeting in the ruins. In the rebel-controlled zone, RDR leaders have been expected to rally their members, but they are operating under difficult conditions with few jobs in the area and uncertain water and electricity supplies. Meanwhile, Ouattara has been living in Paris. In addition, those RDR leaders that Ouattara has been able to secure ministerial positions for, such as Henriette Diabate, who was Minister of Justice in the previous government, and Deputy Secretary General Amadou Gon Coulibaly, who remains Minister of Agriculture, are protected by the UN and less accessible to their members.

¶3. (SBU) In an effort to pacify the rank and file and address their complaints about power being overly concentrated at the top, at the March 4-5 meeting Ouattara announced the creation of over a dozen new positions in the second tier of the party. Ouattara also gave the Deputy Chief-of-Staff (Chef de Cabinet) position to Sidi Toure, a member of the RDR youth wing. This went some way toward pleasing RDR youth, as a way for them to have more influence in the party, but Toure is not a member of the youth group's leadership and indeed he has not been much involved in the group's activities. While papers are speculating that the Chief-of-Staff will also be someone from the youth wing, Karamoko Yayoro, president of the RDR Youth, told us this was still uncertain.

¶3. (U) Ouattara also announced that the RDR will hold a seminar in the coming weeks to unveil the party's political platform. He recently asked local RDR leaders to submit a report on the challenges confronting their individual

communities, so that they can consider these issues as they finalize the party's broader platform. Ouattara also announced that the local and provincial party secretaries would now be elected instead of appointed.

14. (C) COMMENT: Ouattara is trying to spread the power out more among the rank and file members and reinvigorate the RDR after the difficult and violent previous three years during which he was in exile. It is a positive step towards internal democracy in the party that he has increased the number of elected officials and intends to offer a political platform, a rare occurrence in Ivoirian politics. It is also a positive step for him to give more power to the RDR youth, given the demographically large numbers of youth in the country and the dynamic, albeit negative, role that pro-government youth play in the political scene. END COMMENT.

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